

Letters

A Scholar's Ultimate Safeguard: Integrity

To the Editor:

Herbert C. Kelman's "When Scholars Work With the C.I.A." (Op-Ed, March 5) is well-meaning but, I think, a bit too simple. First, why single out the C.I.A. as a possibly problematic source of research support? If it is true, as Professor Kelman says, that "even the most meticulous scholars may be influenced by their sources of support," then why not insist on the same disclosure rules for all sources of support?

Second, I agree that when third parties are involved in a project, they should be informed about the sources of funding — any sources, not just the C.I.A. But I think the idea that scholars must reveal their sources of support for individual work "carried out off campus and on their own time" is wrong, and potentially mischievous.

It is an unacceptable intrusion on the freedom of these individuals. The justification, that the community of scholars is affected by what individual scholars do, postulates a collectivity of mutually responsible members that

exists only in Professor Kelman's mind. A legislated injunction that scholars must do so, as he proposes, is in any case unenforceable. Its only effect would be to stir up mutual suspicion and open the gates to chicanery.

Third, the concern with sources of funding and particularly the obsession with the C.I.A. have tended to obscure the more subtle ways in which scholars' thinking and judgment may be affected. The most obvious and common is simple access to countries that are not open to everyone, and rare access to leaders. Professor Kelman, who has traveled widely in the Middle East and met with Yasir Arafat, must be well aware of the temptations that lie that way. He must also know that the ultimate safeguard against these and all other temptations is the scholar's own sense of integrity and the judgment of his work expressed by his intellectual peers in a free intellectual forum.

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